

Harry S. Truman Writes:

Responsibility Clear: U.S. Must Find Way To Liberate Cubans

By Harry S. Truman
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INDEPENDENCE, Mo., Feb. 23—Along with every one else, I have been concerned about the situation in Cuba. The Cuban people have been beset with internal problems almost from the time Cuba was discovered by Columbus. One set of tyrants seems to be succeeded by another in guise of liberators.

In an open society such as ours it is natural for people freely to express their opinions, or in other words to sound off. This tendency is particularly apparent in times of crisis. There is now much talk about Cuba. There are those who read and talk about it—and there are those who tell those in charge what to do and how to do it.

That is all right, as far as it goes, but it does no good and could do much harm if we get into a political hassle about it. Foreign policy should never be an issue between the great political parties. The United States should agree on and have but one approach to dealings with other nations.

Is there no hope for Cuba? Is Cuba now doomed to become the Balkan satellite of the American continent? Are the Cuban people without hope of becoming a genuinely free and independent people? These and many other questions are being raised.

Will to Be Free

The one thing that history teaches us over and over again is that no system of government that defies the will of its people can long endure and, while modern weapons in the hands of a new crop of Quislings make the task of liberation more formidable, it is as true today as it ever

was that the will of a people to be free is irresistible.

Any government that imposes its will from the top will be overthrown in time. This happens when the people reach that certain point of loss of patience and the congealment of their will to resist. And once they reach that point, they strike back with the savage fury of bloody revolution, resorting in more cruelties in the name of the revolution.

Cuba, historically, has suffered a long series of misfortunes, from its rulers and their depredations, greed and corruption. From the time in 1898 when the United States intervened in Cuba to set her free and to help her establish and maintain a free government for the benefit of all of her people, she has experienced one failure after another.

We have always been sympathetic toward the Cuban people, but for one reason or another things never seemed to work out so that the affairs of Cuba could be administered by honest and devoted patriots rather than the greedy, selfish, grafting dictators that kept succeeding one another.

Support Betrayed

The present situation in Cuba defies all reasoning. Castro, as a revolutionary leader fighting to unseat dictator Batista, attracted sympathetic support from many quarters in this hemisphere, and from the United States in particular. There was some reason to hope that here at long last there may have arisen a true patriot and able leader, who would devote his energies to the establishment of representative government and put through necessary reforms for the benefit of all the Cuban people.

But again our hopes were

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Details on Page A21.

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1963

WTOP-TV (9) Radio (1500)

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U.S. Can't Abandon Cuba, Truman Says

needs of Cuba, Castro betrayed his revolution by delivering the Cuban people to the political imprisonment of a Russian-made Communist dictatorship. He thus committed Cuba to a life of crisis, aggression, oppression and intrigue.

Put Off Responsibility

We admit that our policies toward Cuba, and I would include my own Administration as well, have left something to be desired. For some reason we have put off for too long our responsibility to put pressure on the Cuban leaders to institute badly needed reforms.

The situation in Cuba today is not unlike that of the plight from which many satellite nations are suffering, except that the tragedy of Cuba could have been prevented by us.

Somehow we must seek a way of helping the Cuban people to liberate themselves once and for all. The world situation today is vastly different from what it was at the time we liberated Cuba from Spain. We now have the United Nations, which could have been helpful and perhaps could be in the future. We have the Organization of American States and other cooperative agencies that also could have been enlisted in dealing with that situation. But all of that is water over the dam.

Modern Weapons

There is one thing we cannot do and must not do and that is to abandon Cuba to her self-imposed tyrants and new conquerors. For as long as these people enforce their will by the use of modern weapons the Cuban people will be compelled to undergo prolonged suffering, before they can hope to restore themselves by the process of spontaneous popular uprising.

The Cuban people are now pretty much in the same fix as the Hungarians who found that they could not liberate themselves by attempting to meet mechanized Russian divisions with rifles and homemade explosives.

But Cuba is in our own front yard where we have a direct responsibility to make her people free again. The first time we "remembered the Maine"—now we should never forget to "remember the missile"

Doctrine and the Platt Amendment, were there as much for the welfare and protection of Cuba as for the security of all the other nations of this continent.

Far From Exhausted

The situation is clear, the problem is obvious, the solution not so apparent. But, like the bubonic plague of cholera, quarantining is one remedy that every public health authority knows must be imposed until a virulent epidemic abates.

As a nation devoted to peace, we have had to suffer much abuse and provocation at the hands of the Communists, but we have been patient. And our patience, though often sorely tried, is far from exhausted. We, of course, continue to hope that some way, somehow, the Cuban people will see to it that these latter-day Quislings are

But I repeat that the Cuban situation is in a different category and should not be confused with the other satellite victims within the Russian-Chinese orbit. Cuba was delivered to Communist control and domination by a betrayal of a modern-day Quisling, Castro. He perpetrated this act of treason against the Cuban people and even his revolutionary followers in the name of liberation from "colonialism." But instead of winning her freedom from her own dictatorship, Cuba has become a colony again—a colony of Communist Russia.

I think that it is well that we take a look at the record of our past relations with Cuba. From early 1899 to mid-1902, while Cuba was under temporary United States military rule following her liberation from Spain, most of the offices were placed under Cuban nationals. During that period much was done to build public works, strict measures of sanitation were put into effect, the Civil Service was reformed and public education significantly improved. Yellow fever, which had been plaguing Cuba for centuries, was eradicated.

At the same time a constitutional convention was called to establish a system for self-government. The first Cuban continental congress met on May 5, 1902, and we turned over control of the government to the people of Cuba.

In restoring Cuba to self-government the so-called Platt Amendment was accepted by Cuba on June 12, 1901, as a part of its Constitution.

Amendment Provisions

Among the several provisions of the Platt Amendment were these:

1. The sanitation measures set up by the military were to be maintained.
2. Naval stations were authorized to be leased to the United States.
3. The United States reserved the right to interfere in the affairs of the island if it became necessary.

It seems to me that when it appeared that the situation in Cuba was getting out of hand and that a threat to the security of this Hemisphere was early in the making, we could have considered the basic implications of the Monroe Doctrine were at stake, as well as the reservation imposed by the Platt Amendment, which anticipated just such a development. provisions, the Monroe

House. This is the way I might have put it to him:

"Mr. Castro, your revolution is over and now you have the responsibility and the big job of reconstruction. You have made a great many promises to your people in enlisting their support. How are you going to make good in those promises? You don't have the resources of your own in Cuba, and there are no means in sight to enable you to perform the things you promised the Cuban people.

"Now, there are only two places where you might get the necessary economic support to put over your program of reforms. We are close to Cuba and we have historic ties with your country. All we would expect in return for our support would be that you keep the Cuban institutions free, and the Cuban people free, and that you get rid of corruption. This is all we would ask, this is all we would expect, and Cuba would enjoy complete sovereignty and independence as a nation. But if you should elect to go the other way—the Communist way—you will become a puppet and that can only lead you to more trouble and bloodshed."

We Stand Firm

I would have hoped that after some such exchange we should have come to an understanding and I think we might have reached a friendly agreement. All this, of course, needed to have been quietly negotiated within the privacy of the White House. With that out of the way I might have closed our meeting with a friendly suggestion, perhaps something like this:

"Now that we understand each other, Fidel, let us get to work and do all we can for the cause of your people."

The Cuban crisis has served one useful purpose—it again smoked out the Russian capacity for bluff and their "hit-and-run" type of international piracy. And it provided the United States with an opportunity to make it clear to the Communist aggressors that once the line is drawn we stand firm.

Afghani in Moscow

MOSCOW, Feb. 23 (AP)—Ghulyam Mohammed Shirzad, Afghanistan's Minister of Trade, has arrived to negotiate a Soviet-Afghan pact for 1963.

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But again our hopes were doomed to disappointment. The man, Castro, became inflated and power mad—and incapable of the kind of leadership Cuba needed in her period of reconstruction.

Instead of applying his energies to the solution of the

See TRUMAN, A5, Col. 1

The Washington Post Times Herald

The Weather

Today—Increasing cloudiness, rising temperature, high near 40 Tonight—Chance of rain or snow, low 30 to 35. Monday—Clearing, cold. Saturday's high, 34 at 4 p. m.; low, 12 at 6:50 a. m. Weather Map and Details on Page A21.

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But Cuba is in our own front yard where we have a direct responsibility to make her people free again. The first time we "remembered the Maine"—now we should never forget to "remember the missiles." Now we must seriously consider the Communists and their Asian and Eastern European ideas.

In Different Category

It is my opinion that until the sources of all the world's tensions and dangers are overcome within those nations that constitute the centers of the Communist conspiracy, namely, the police states of Russia and China, there is little chance for the occupied satellites to settle matters for themselves.

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A former President, much as he might try, cannot detach himself from events, even long after he is out of office. On one of my walks a thought kept going through my mind on how I might have dealt with Castro if it had been mine to do. This is how I saw it: Immediately after the conclusion of the revolution in Cuba, I would have invited Castro to the White

Communist Russia.

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